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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

RICHARD J. KESSLER, STAFF DIRECTOR
KEITH B. ASHDOWN, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

March 27, 2013

Commissioner Raymond W. Kelley
New York City Police Department
1 Police Plaza
New York, NY 10038

Dear Commissioner Kelly:

I am writing in response to your letter of March 15th expressing concern about my amendment to the FY 2013 continuing resolution, which would have prohibited Department of Homeland Security grant funds can be spent through the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) program. Thank you for your feedback and concern.

New York's Finest are world-renowned for their bravery, courage, integrity and leadership and the city is a symbol of much of what makes our nation great. Perhaps now more than ever during this time of unprecedented fiscal challenges and shortfalls, it is these great qualities New York City epitomizes we need to inspire us to make difficult choices to prioritize what is best for the entire nation and do more with less.

I respect and appreciate the important work that the NYPD does, including your partnerships with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, on major terrorism investigations. I also recognize that in the current fiscal environment your department, like many other agencies, faces challenges allocating resources.

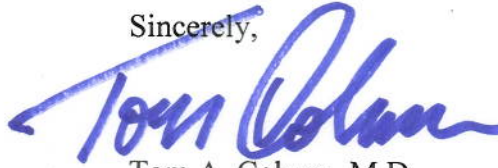
But the federal government currently faces a nearly \$17 trillion national debt and runs up annual budget deficits that exceed \$1 trillion. Congress must begin reviewing the spending on all departments and programs, even programs like UASI originally intended to support counter-terrorism initiatives. At a time when the federal government is furloughing employees and cutting back on overtime, we must even question whether we can provide support to states and local governments to pay their employees overtime. It is difficult to justify paying overtime to employees in a handful of cities at the same time border patrol agents, air traffic controllers, defense personnel and even Capitol police will be furloughed, possibly for weeks, with no pay at all.

Last year, my office conducted a year-long inquiry into the UASI program. We learned that while this program was originally intended to assist cities like New York to prevent and respond to potential terrorist attack, it had turned into yet another Washington spending program. That report cited testimony to Congress from Mayor Michael Bloomberg warning that the UASI program was in danger of becoming, "the exact kind of political pork barrel it was specifically designed to avoid." We found that resources have frequently been diverted to smaller

cities that are less likely to be the target of major terrorist attacks. And many urban areas were using DHS grant funds on routine expenditures, rather than on clear national priorities.

One purpose in offering this amendment was to bring attention to the need to reform and improve programs like UASI and other DHS grant programs to ensure that each dollar we spent is used makes our country safer. As we move forward to reform and strengthen the Department of Homeland Security, I would welcome your feedback for how we can prioritize our resource allocation most effectively.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Tom Coburn". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "T" and a cursive "Coburn".

Tom A. Coburn, M.D.
Ranking Member